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ABSTRACT

Sesame Street programs are perpetuating the subjugated role of females by presenting a picture of male-dominated society while portraying females in roles of following, cleaning, mothering and imitating, and as being of limited intelligence, subservient and passive. Analysis of a randomly chosen Sesame Street program (#189) shows how the series perpetuates the stereotyped, subjugated role of the female. In the program only males do enjoyable or important things. They appear more than twice as often as females and dominate the audio track of the program. Further analysis reveals that males are shown to be interested in and capable of intelligent, intellectual thinking, problem-solving, logical reasoning, and decision-making. Women are portrayed as lacking information, concerned simply with the mechanics of mundane activities (in the kitchen) and not with abstractions. Inspection of dialogue illuminates instances of male competency/dominance and female insufficiency/subordination. Most objectionably, in one scene the female is portrayed as physically more weak than the male to whom she must desperately cling. The male is portrayed as calm, strong and unconcerned with the difficulty of the female while something more important occupies his mind. Concepts such as these are harmful to teach children. Sesame Street success in the non-stereotyped portrayal of minorities must be extended to their portrayals of women. (Author/RH)

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SEXISM ON SESAME STREET

Outdated Concepts in a "Progressive" Program

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by

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CN001539

NUMBER OF CHARACTER APPEARANCES

	MALE	FEMALE
muppets	40	4
cartoon figures	10	2
disguised people	1	0
adults	13	3
children	14	16
TOTAL	78	35

NUMBER OF CHARACTER APPEARANCES WITH DIALOGUE

	MALE	FEMALE
muppets	34	2
cartoon figures	3	1
disguised people	3	0
adults	10	3
children	6	2
TOTAL	56	8

NUMBER OF NARRATIONS

	MALE	FEMALE
adults and children combined	4	1

LENGTH OF DIALOGUE TIME IN MINUTES AND SECONDS

	MALE	FEMALE
muppets	16 min. 17 sec.	13 seconds
cartoon figures	1 min. 50 sec.	9 seconds
disguised people	1 min. 54 sec.	0
adults	8 min. 1.5 sec.	2 min. 30.5 sec.
children	2 min. 5 sec.	1 min. 8 sec.
narration	2 min. 38 sec.	45 seconds
TOTAL	32 min. 36 sec.	4 min. 45.5 sec.

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Sesame Street is easily one of the more progressive, educational, and popular children's program on television today. It has been demonstrated that children are learning basic concepts well, just by watching the program and emulating the characters. Sesame Street programs are perpetuating the subjugated role of females. Most viewers, including young children who learn by imitation rather than analysis, accept this portrayal of male and female roles as representative, hence as desirable.

Sesame Street is capable of portraying minority groups in roles showing leadership, intelligence, equality, creativity, and independence. Sesame Street shows minority groups in non-stereotyped roles. But, Sesame Street portrays females in roles of following, cleaning, mothering, imitating, and being of limited intelligence, subservient, and passive. Sesame Street shows females in stereotyped roles. Portraying the stereotyped female role is as undesirable as portraying the stereotyped minority role. Sesame Street has sufficient cultural introspection to enable it to eliminate the portrayal of ethnic stereotypes, but it lacks this introspection when portraying females and, there, it continues to portray sexual stereotypes. That this program is sexist is, hopefully, because of a lack of awareness on the part of the staff responsible for the production of Sesame Street. The following analysis of Sesame Street #189, should make the reader more aware of how Sesame Street perpetuates the stereotyped, subjugated role of the female. This particular program (#189) was chosen at random from the many Sesame Street programs.

Sesame Street presents a picture of a male dominated society. The young child watching this program continually sees only males doing the fun or important things. Male characters appear more than twice as often as female characters. Males dominate the audio portion of this program even more than they dominate the visual portion of this program. The number of male characters with dialogue was seven times that of females with dialogue. The length of time given to this male dialogue was seven-fold that which was given to female dialogue. In addition to this, the length of time for male voice narration was three times more than the length of time for female voice narration. The table which follows gives figures for the above-mentioned statistical breakdown of Sesame Street program #189.

What kind of world is Sesame Street presenting to the young viewers? How will this effect their views of their own world? It presents a world of real and imaginary characters, nearly all of which are male. That the Sesame Street world is full of imaginary characters is justified, because children enjoy this. Children will realize that these characters are imaginary, because in their real world they will never meet these characters. When they ask adults, children are told that these characters do not really exist. But what is the justification for presenting a male dominated society? When a child compares this portrayal of society with society around her or him, what will tell her or him that society need not be dominated by males? It will be little if anything on Sesame Street.

Let us take a closer look at Sesame Street #189. This will show us just how Sesame Street females are subjugated in stereotyped roles.

As this program begins, you see several boys and girls in various activities. There are about as many boys as there are girls. At first glance the scene does not seem to be perpetuating any myths. Upon closer examination, it becomes obvious that the girls pictured are all, except one, seen in inactive roles. The girls, except for one, are standing and looking. The boys are all, except one, seen in active roles. The boys, except the one, are running, jumping, and climbing. The one girl who is seen running is doing so with a boy. The one boy who is seen standing is doing so with a girl. The only time a girl is seen in an active role is when she is with a boy. The only time a boy is seen in a passive role is when he is with a girl. So, an all girl group is pictured as passive; an all boy group is pictured as active. This helps indoctrinate children with the concept that most females are passive and most males are active.

The next scene is that of a man holding a broken airplane. There are two girls in the background. A boy comes riding along on a bicycle and stops near the man. The man is fixing a broken airplane, and while he does this he gives verbal information to teach the "what happens next?" concept. He explains what he is doing and gives the logical reason for what he is doing, "We're going to find out if the plane works." He also asks questions of the boy, which the boy answers. The girls stay in the background and play catch, taking no notice of the problem-solving that the man and boy are doing. The role of the man then, is to give out information. The role of the boy is also to give out information, and learn technical skills. The role of the girls is to stay in the background and play catch. This scene perpetuates several myths. The first is that males enjoy playing with machine-type toys and females do not. Another myth passed on is that males enjoy and are capable of repairing something and females are not interested in this. Still another myth reinforced is that males are interested and capable of figuring out concepts with the use of logic while females are uninterested in this activity and prefer engaging in activity that requires little thinking. Males are shown in a role of being interested in and capable of thinking intelligently. Females are shown in a role of being uninterested in thinking intelligently.

The next scene is that of a person in the kitchen. This person has all of the necessary articles for setting the table. This scene is also supposed to teach the "What happens next?" concept. The person names each article on the table and then says that the viewer was right in thinking that the table would then be set. The person proceeds to set the table and has no dialogue while doing so. The film is run in fast motion, but the reason for this is not clear. It could be to give the illusion of much physical activity, or it could be to minimize the time spent on this scene. The scene itself shows a very stereotyped female role, that of serving others in the kitchen. The person given this role was a woman. If this did not surprise you, then it should be obvious to you just how much this activity, setting the table, is seen as a female role in life. The role of the female in this scene was to engage in a stereotyped female activity. She was only concerned with the mechanics of setting the table, not the logical reasons for doing so. In other words, she shows very little logical, intelligent thought.

Why, in the first scene, did the male character demonstrate the ability for logical reasoning when, in the second scene, the female did not? If a child needs to be told that

the reason for fixing a toy is so that it will work, then a child needs to be told that the reason for setting a table is so that everyone can eat. One apparent reason for the lack of explanation during the rapid activity of the latter scene was the main character was a woman. With examples like this, will children grow up thinking that males are interested and capable of logical reasoning and females are not?

The above-mentioned woman, who is supposed to be the wife of the man, was shown in a typical housewife's role. Why could she not have been out fixing the airplane while her husband was setting the table? Or, why could not they both have been setting the table? Is it so certain that women would rather set the table than play with and fix some mechanical toy? If little girls grow up with examples like this, is it any surprise that so many girls grow up being rather uninterested in fixing machines and more accepting or even interested in doing household chores?

The next scene is a man preparing to plant a flower. Again, this is teaching the "What happens next?" concept. The man explains each thing he does at the same time he is doing it. He also states the logical reason for his actions, ". . .a flower is going to grow out of that pot. . ." So, like the first man we saw, this man's role is to give out information about actions and give the logical reasons for these actions. He also shows interest and ability in problem-solving techniques, explaining how to plant a flower. Again, a male is shown to be interested in and capable of intelligent, intellectual thinking--problem-solving and logical reasoning.

In these first three scenes, compare the lengths of dialogue and time of males and females. The female children have no dialogue at all. The male child has about two seconds of dialogue. The adult female had a total of 14.5 seconds of dialogue time. The first and second adult males' dialogue times were 68.5 and 82.5 seconds respectively, for a total time of 151 seconds. Both the adult female and adult males were teaching "What happens next?" concept. Why was each man given four to five times more dialogue than the woman was?

The next scene is a male character with all the equipment for doing the laundry. Again, it is the "What happens next?" concept. The male gets confused about what happens next. Another male muppet comes along and tells him what happens next. It is commendable that the male was shown trying to do his own laundry instead of having a female do it for him. But one wonders why the male is incapable of doing this particular job without help.

The "What happens next?" concept is again shown in the next scene. Two male muppets are shown. One opens a box of cookies and the other eats them. The first male muppet eats the box. Again, there is an absence of female characters.

After this comes a sequence of numbers narrated by both male and female voices. It shows cartoon figures demonstrating the different numbers. The cartoon characters,

which are supposed to be spies, all appear to be males. The drivers of cars all appear to be males. The Indians all appear to be males. Where are all the females? Are there female spies, car drivers, and Indians everywhere except on Sesame Street?

Then we see the man with the toy airplane again. He is still trying to fix it, but needs glue. Enter another man, in need of a newspaper so he can read the sports. The store is closed. Now a male muppet enters the scene and he needs sour cream from the store. All three males discuss the problem and arrive at a solution. They will share and each give the other what the other needs. So, once again, we see males using logic and solving problems. Why could it not have been a female who wanted the newspaper, so she could read the sports? There is absolutely no reason that would prevent a female from being in the latter skit. So, where is she? Why do we see only males using logic and solving problems?

Now the cartoon demonstrating numbers is shown again, with the spies, car drivers, and Indians. Then we see the three males finishing their problem-solving. This time they carry out the solution. Again, no females are seen.

The next scene is objectionable in several ways. First a male muppet is shown. Then another male muppet enters, dressed like a delivery person. Now, why is the delivery muppet a male? There are female delivery persons, but Sesame Street continues to give this occupation to a male. That this job is considered a "man's job" is attested to by the fact that people generally refer to a delivery man, not a delivery person, a delivery woman, or a delivery one. Sesame Street is perpetuating the myth that delivery persons are male, not female. Why?

The delivery muppet says he is looking for a "lady." If he had been looking for a man, would he have said gentleman? Why does he not say that he is looking for a woman? He does not know this woman, but he assumes that she must be a lady. Already this woman is defined according to her social mannerisms. So, the first male muppet helps the delivery person find this "lady." To do this, he first asks the delivery person what the lady's name is. He is told that she is Mary Ann Abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz. The first male muppet is still unable to identify her until he asks whether she is Miss or Mrs. The answer is "Mrs." The first male muppet then remembers her immediately and tells the delivery muppet where she lives. Why is it that this lady, with such an unusual name, is unrecognizable until she is defined in her relationship to a man? Another interesting thing is that this female was not allowed to be single marital status. It seems that all the females on Sesame Street are married or are too young to be married. This does not hold true for males. More about this will be said later. In summary, this skit helps perpetuate two myths. The first is that parcel delivery is a male occupation. The second is that a very important thing about a female's name is the part of it that tells you her relationship to a man.

The next scene is a male cartoon character telling about the letter "E". Again, no female is seen.

Next, is a story read by a man. The story is accompanied by muppets acting it out like a play. The title is "The Most Beautiful Woman in the World." The first time you see muppets is when the story says, ". . .all the people of the village working in the field." This is represented by four male muppets and one female muppet in the field. If this represents the whole village, then the ratio of males to females is four to one. Next, someone is heard crying. A male muppet, who will be called the "leader" because that is his role throughout the story, leads the other muppets to a little boy muppet. The boy muppet goes on to explain that he has lost his mother. The leader muppet tells the boy muppet that they will find his mother. But the only information he asks for in order to do this is what the woman looks like. He does not ask her name, the boy's name, her occupation, etc. He only asks about her physical appearance. Everything else, including her capability, occupation, address, and name, is secondary to her looks. The boy muppet then replies that his mother is the most beautiful woman in the world. That is all that is said about her actual appearance. Nothing is said of her age, height, weight, color of hair, etc. This tells us that the single most distinguishing characteristic for a woman's inentification is whether she is beautiful or not. Where does this leave us? That the most important attribute identifying a woman is her beauty. This is a subtly inaccurate concept to be teaching young children, especially young girls.

The muppets all go to the village to look for the mother of the boy muppet. The only other villagers that appear are males. It seems this village has very little female population--one to be exact. The male telling the story now says, "They gathered all the women of the village together and they chose the most beautiful woman of all." This is represented by a group of male muppets in a huddle naming the names of women and groaning. Then the desired name is mentioned and they all "aaaah" with approval. So, here we have the decision-making members of the village, all men, judging all the women of the village. The women are judged only on their beauty. The chosen woman then appears. Interestingly enough, she is the same woman that was out in the field with the men, the only woman seen thus far. Does this hint that the woman who is accepted in men's company, has to be very beautiful? Does it condition the observant child to believe that the only women in this village who are to be seen in an active role are seen only for their beauty?

The story goes on, "And they brought her to the little boy." It is sad that they did not ask the woman any useful questions, for example: (1) had she lost a little boy, or indeed (2) did she even have a little boy? Are beautiful women naturally so unintelligent that it would be useless to ask such questions? Or, is it a well-known fact that any beautiful woman would naturally be a mother and perhaps not know who her children were anyway?

The boy muppet says the woman is not his mother and says, "my mother is more beautiful than that." Then we hear, "and he sent the people to all the villages nearby." This refers to the male leader muppet. The people are represented by a group of male muppets. It seems the only people meaningful enough to appear or to be noticed, other than for their beauty, are men, not women. "And in each village they chose the most

beautiful woman of all and brought her back to the little boy." Again, no questions were asked of these women. Instead they are brought many miles to be judged on their beauty in the strange village. It seems these women are so passive that they do not question this abduction. Also it seems that these women have no responsibilities or meaningful work to keep them at home. They apparently drop everything and come miles to participate in a beautiful-mother contest.

"My mother is more beautiful than that" is what the boy muppet says about all the women who are brought to him. They then extend the hunt for the most beautiful woman to the whole kingdom. They never ask any more information about the missing woman. Why do they not ask about her occupation? Or could it be that if you are a mother you could not possibly be doing anything else at the same time? The women who are brought in front of the boy are not asked anything. Apparently, the judgment of the boy and his opinion are more valuable than that of an adult female. The narration goes on, "as you can imagine, they were just about ready to give up." The male leader muppet says, "I just don't know what to do. Where can this boy's beautiful mother be hiding?" Again, the woman is defined only by physical beauty and her relationship to a child. This seems to be the only term in which they can think about this mystery woman. If they cannot find her by her beauty, there seems to be no other way to find her. Is this going to tell young viewers that the most distinguishing thing about any woman is her beauty and not even her name? Is it going to tell young viewers that the most notable achievement of a woman is whether or not she has a child?

The narration continues, "Just then an old woman came pushing through the crowd. Her hands were rough and calloused and her shoulders were bent from working many years in the field." It is interesting to note that the story denotes the fact that women do work in the fields, and yet the majority of people shown in the fields were men. The voice also says, "her clothes were not much more than rags." The woman, who is looking for her son as she says later, does not see him although she is standing right next to him. He sees her though, and recognizes her as his mother. He speaks to her and then she notices him and recognizes him. It seems that a young boy's observations are superior to an adult woman's, even if she is supposed to be looking very hard for something. So, here we have the picture of the real mother, ". . .not at all beautiful, dressed in shabby clothes. . .and her eyes had dark circles and were red from crying. . ."

The story ends with the male leader muppet saying, "I guess there's a lesson to be learned here. To me she is not beautiful, but what I think doesn't matter, does it? To this young lad, his mother is the most beautiful woman in the world." Here we learned that even an ugly woman can appear beautiful to someone if she is in the role of a mother.

The man who reads the story then explains the lesson with, "Well, this is a lesson to be learned, isn't it? What's not so beautiful to some, can be very very beautiful to others." Or, is there a different lesson to be learned from all this? Perhaps the lesson is that the most beautiful woman in the world is certain to turn out to be a mother. Or maybe the lesson is that a woman will only be seen for her beauty, not for her mind or any function outside of being beautiful and a mother. Or is it that, if there is a problem to be solved, the men should solve it and to ask any woman involved for any advice or for any information would be useless, even if that problem involves that woman. Sesame Street is unwittingly passing on the same old time-worn prejudices about the values and functions of women.

In the next scene, we see a male character. He reads a poem which he has written. It is about the different homes that different animals have. So this time we see a male being creative.

Then comes another ultimately objectionable scene. First, it shows children playing in a playground. It has close-ups of a girl walking while looking at the ground. She comes up to a boy who is playing in the sand. Then begins a long dialogue with the girl asking questions of the boy. She asks him to build a house for her. She does not attempt to build anything, but instead watches the boy. The boy builds a tree, a hole in the ground, and so on. Each time she says that none of these is a home. He then explains to her how each is a home to some animals. So here we see the female lacking information and giving out what proves to be misinformation. Each time the girl is shown trying out the tree or hole and so on, to see if she would like it for her home. Each time she does not like it. She is shown in the tree, hanging on tightly. She is seen crawling out of a hole and wiping her brow. Apparently, it is hard work for this girl to crawl. The boy is seen, in rapid motion this time, running to the water and gathering a bunch of sticks. Then he builds a beaver's hut. The pattern of the scene is the same as it was with the tree and the hole in the ground. The boy then builds a chicken coop and a barn, still explaining each to the girl. The girl contributes no original ideas or skills. She is merely allowed to give her preference to the type of housing she prefers. The boy does the physical activity. He also gives the correct answers to all of the questions and corrects the girl when she says something incorrect. The boy is presented as having more knowledge than the girl does. Throughout this scene, we see the girl requesting some imaginary housing and the boy providing this housing. Finally, the boy provides a "people's" house. In the girl's words, this is the "perfect" house. She is seen inside the house, sitting in a chair holding and petting a dog. Models like this condition girls and boys to "know" that the male provides the housing, while the female stays within that housing to fulfill a motherly role. When children who have been conditioned by such models, become adults and fulfill these stereotyped roles, are they choosing to do so or are they merely doing what society expects of them? Are influencing examples like this one helping to keep a large segment of our population in the domestic role, simply on the basis of their sex?

A skit, which featured two male muppets, was shown in the middle of the above-mentioned scene. These males counted to the number 20. Why could not one of these have been a female?

We then see a cartoon of a male character. Another male voice narrates this and tells about the letter "B". No females are seen or heard in the skit.

Then a male muppet is shown counting apples. Another male comes along and decides to eat an apple. The first male muppet makes the appropriate change in his counting. The second male muppet then decides not to eat the apple. Again, the first male muppet makes the appropriate change in his counting. This has demonstrated counting, adding and substracting. A male was seen to be interested in and capable of doing arithmetic. If only Sesame Street had put a female in this role, they would have avoided the perpetuation of myth that math and arithmetic are a male area of interest more then a female area of interest.

Next is a cartoon which presents the letter "E". A female is shown sleeping under a tree. A male, who narrates the cartoon, is shown riding an eagle. The female is supposed to be looking for an Easter egg. The male finds the egg and goes away with it on the eagle. How is the female supposed to look for something and sleep at the same time? Her only action during the whole cartoon is that, "she let out a squeal." So, here again we see a female being passive. She is unable to accomplish her goal, keeping an Easter egg, because of her passivity. And, when she is awakened her sole, assertive action is to let out a squeal.

Next is seen a man, a girl, and a boy. The man asks a question directly to the boy. The boy then answers the question. Then a male muppet is shown and the man tries to scare him. The muppet does not get scared, and that is the end of the skit. The female has had no dialogue at all. The man was shown starting a game. The boy had an interesting story to tell. The girl did absolutely nothing except stand and watch the activity of the males. The only function of the female was to provide token representation of her sex. The scene could have been done just as well if the part played by the female was eliminated. Why then was the only female who was allowed to be seen also seen in an unimportant role? Was the inclusion of a female merely an after thought?

Next, a male muppet is seen in the forest. He is afraid and sings a song to help alleviate his fear. Two more male muppets are seen. No female is seen in the scene.

Finally, there is a scene with equal representation of the sexes. Children blowing bubbles are shown while a song is sung by both girls and boys. Next we go back to the male dominated educational sequences. A male character is seen with a man. The object is to teach the letter "B" and a box is used to do this. The man asks questions and the male character explains the purpose of the box. So here we see one male trying to solve a mystery and another male giving information. Of course, no females took part in this activity.

The cartoon discussed earlier, is shown again. It is teaching the letter "B".

An adult male muppet enters, reads a "Bus" sign and explains that he is waiting for the bus. Then an adult female muppet enters and asks, "Bus?" The male confirms her accuracy by saying, "Bus." Then a young male muppet enters with much the same dialogue that occurred between the male and female muppet.

If we analyze the above scene, we see that the male adult is the knowledgeable figure. The female adult and the male child depend upon the male adult for information. This shows adult female and the child to be on the same intellectual development plateau. The bus, a miniature, now pulls up and a miniature muppet gets off the bus. This is the end of the scene.

Traffic is shown next, and a narration is done by both a girl and a boy. The purpose of this is to teach the functions of traffic lights. The boy asks the girl a question, "Do you know what that is?" She answers, but incompletely, "Sure, that's a traffic light. It tells the cars when to stop and go." He then explains the answer in

full, "And it tells people that it's okay to cross the street. The light on the top is red. That means stop. When the light is red, everybody has to stop." Even though the boy has asked a question, it becomes obvious that he was not seeking information. He was testing the girl's knowledge. When the girl answers, it is shown that her knowledge is insufficient. The boy then explains to the girl those things which she did not offer. It is evident that the boy knows more than the girl and that any question he asks are not the result of his lacking knowledge. Next the boy says, "The light on the top means stop." The girl repeats what the boy just told her, and asks him a question, "The light on the top means stop? That's the red light. How about the light on the bottom?" It seems the girl is trying to understand what the boy said, and needs to find out more. This is different than if she had said, "that's right." Or a similar phrase. A phrase like the latter would denote that she knew what he should say before he finished saying it. But she merely repeats what the boy said. This denotes that the information is new to her and that she wants to make sure she understands it correctly. Now the boy answers her question, "The light on the bottom means go. That's the green light." Again, she repeats what he says, "Green means go? The light on the bottom means go." This indicates that his knowledge was sufficient, because the girl did not add any information. Her repetition again implies that the information is new to her.

The boy now asks the girl a question, "Do you know what would happen if we didn't have traffic lights?" She cannot answer it and asks, "What?" This shows that her knowledge is now lacking even more than before, for she did not even attempt to answer the question. So the boy "shows" her the answer by way of a film. Again, the boy's question was only a way of testing the girl's knowledge. She failed the test. As in the similar scene, the one with the building of houses, discussed before, the boy and girl have all the dialogue. In both scenes the boy was superior in knowledge and the boy was teaching the girl. It would not be surprising to find that the children watching these scenes would think these to be typical of male and female abilities and roles. The same relative abilities have been shown twice, in different situations. Young girls may identify with these females who possess less general knowledge than males and expect to be taught by males.

The next scene is very objectionable in the portrayal of the female. There is a male muppet standing in the wind and singing "Gone with the Wind." We see that the wind is blowing hard because all the leaves are blowing off the trees. Other than by blowing the male's hair, the wind does not affect the male muppet in any way. The wind increases so much so that it blows a tree away. But the male is still unaffected by this strong wind. Then, a female muppet is shown. She struggles against the wind and finally gets next to the male muppet. Here we see how relatively weak the female is and that she must expend much effort to accomplish the same thing that a male can do with very little effort. When this female gets next to the male, she hangs on to him. He does not attempt to hang onto her at all. Note that it is the female who must desparately cling to the male. The female is too weak to resist the wind and she is blown away. The male calmly observes this and continues on with his song. He apparently cares little whether this female is with him or not. Something more important occupies his mind. He cannot worry about where she is or what is happening to her. The female muppet is now shown in a house. She is looking out the window with her attention focused on the male. The song he is singing describes her as his "love." The

house then blows away with her in it. The male is still unaffected by this strong wind. He simply continues his song. So, we are to understand that this male is exceedingly strong. He is also untouched by any emotions. He seems to be more concerned with continuing his song than trying to help his "love." We are also to understand that this female is very weak in comparison to the male. And all of her energies have been focused around the male. Unlike the male, she has given no evidence of any independent action. The male is the focus of her thoughts, yet she is not the focus of his. His focus of thought is his independent activity. Next in the scene, the female is again struggling to reach the male. She is blown away again. Of course, he is untouched by this great force and merely continues to sing his song. Then, the female is seen struggling against the wind and being blown away again. The male is shown standing fast and again does not try to help her in any way. Neither does he display any emotion about the conditions around him. Once again, the female tries to get to the male. She reaches him. He is so oblivious to her presence that he makes a gesture with his arm during the song and knocks her from the scene. He is not even aware of this event. He is so involved with his activity that he has no notice of his "love." Is it that what he is doing is far more important than anything she might be doing? The song he is singing tells us how sad he is to have lost his love. Yet in reality we see he is quite capable of carrying on without his ex-companion; indeed, he is quite oblivious to her now. She cannot seem to do without him. She is shown constantly with all her energies and thoughts trying to get back to him. Because of her physical weakness, she is unable to obtain her goal. She cannot stand alone and nothing in her environment can support her. She then tries to cling to him for support. For some reason, he does not wish to support her and so all of her efforts are in vain.

These are harmful concepts to teach children. But, the scene is not yet finished. Once more the female muppet struggles to get back to the protection of the male muppet. This time she is so weakened that it is necessary for her to crawl back to him. Once again, she holds onto him and he, unaware of her presence, makes another gesture and knocks her from the scene. He continues singing his song. Then, she is shown fighting the wind again. This time she clings to a tree. The tree blows away with her. The idea is reinforced that alone she cannot prevail and nothing in her environment can help her. But, the male has no difficulty supporting himself and needs nothing in his environment to help him, least of all a female. Now, all the male's clothing blows off, except for his underwear. Finally the wind gets too strong even for our strong male. He is blown off the screen. Is this strong, unfeeling male supposed to be the model for male children? And what of the weak dependent female? Are female children to find a model in her?

Two hands are shown over a piece of cake. This scene is to teach children how to share. The narration is done by a female. Why is female narration limited to dealing with food, specifically the serving of food? Again, we have the female associated with a stereotyped female role.

A cartoon is shown now. A female cartoon figure talks about the letter "B." She sees a bug and says "Blaughck." A typical stereotyped female reaction to bugs. Then she kills the bug. An explosion occurs and the scene ends with her looking very dirty and confused. She lacks control of the situation.

Now a male muppet begins a lecture on the letter "B". Another male muppet appears and changes the letter to "R", "P", "I", and then "F". As each new letter appears, the first male muppet explains what the new letter is. One male is depicted as possessing knowledge. The other is shown being self-assertive. Why were no females shown in either of these roles?

Then, another cartoon is shown. A male cartoon figure, a boxer, starts to tell about the letter "B". To do so, he talks about the sport of boxing. Then, a giant foot steps on him. The male in this scene was portrayed as possessing knowledge. He was also interested and involved in sports. Why was a female not portrayed as possessing knowledge? Could not a female have enjoyed and been involved in sports?

Finally a woman is seen, but she is still in the kitchen. She has not been seen outside the home and, specifically, not outside the kitchen. There are three children with the woman, one girl and two boys. An educational game, "three of these things belong together," is played. The woman asks the children questions. The boys do most of the answering. In fact, when the camera comes in for a close-up of the children when they are answering, the girl is not even shown. Could not the girl have been a little more prominent in giving out information? Why does this woman still have to be seen in the kitchen?

Next, we see two male muppets and a plate of cookies. The first male muppet tells the second that he cannot have any cookies. The second male muppet then leaves. He returns disguised as a male baker. Why is it that the females of this program are seen in the kitchen, but when a baker is shown, it is a male? Do females only work in the preparation of food when there is no profit to be made? The first male muppet then allows the second male muppet to have a cookie. The first male muppet says he wants a "professional opinion." So the reason that the second male muppet gets a cookie is that he has valuable information to offer. He qualified for a free cookie because of his knowledge. He eats the cookie and leaves. Then, he returns, this time disguised as a little girl. The first male muppet takes pity upon what he thinks is a little girl. He says, "this poor little girl is hungry." He then gives her a cookie. The reason the first male gives the little girl the cookie is that he pities her. Her qualification is her sex and the helplessness that her sex implies. One might think that her qualification was her hunger. But, if that was the reason, then why was it not offered as a qualification by the male muppet that was shown earlier? No, the only qualification this "little girl" had was her sex. Her unique individuality or ability are all rendered irrelevant.

The little girl leaves. Another male enters and thus ends the scene. The only female role in this scene was played by a male.

Next, a male cartoon figure talks about the letter "E". Where are all of the females in the world of Sesame Street?

Next, a male muppet is shown. He says, "Some of us are here, but not all of us." He leaves. Then, four male muppets appear and say, "Now some of us are here, but not all of us." They exit. Then, ten male muppets enter and say, "But now all of us are here." If this is "all" of them, where are the females? Perhaps we are just seeing the important people of the Sesame Street world. There is no logical reason that females should have been excluded from this scene.

At long last, there comes what seems to be an unobjectionable scene. One small monkey is shown with two large monkeys. But wait, it is accompanied by a song. Of course, it is a male voice singing.

Now we see the woman that we saw earlier. She is still in the kitchen! Of course, she is in the company of children. If young viewers still have any doubts as to what the adult female stereotyped role in society is, this scene should reinforce all the other examples given earlier. The woman's place, according to the examples of this show, is in the home--preferable with some children. The two boys in this scene are folding napkins. The girl, who is at the extreme background, is putting dishes away. The woman is washing the dishes. It is interesting that it is consistently females who do the work of cleaning or organizing the dishes. This scene perpetuates the myth that females belong at work in the kitchen. Could not a man, perhaps this woman's husband, have been doing the dishes? Or is he still trying to fix a toy? Apparently he has time to play, but no time to help his wife do some of her household work. Or is that work done in the home supposed to be done by women and children.

Unsurprisingly, the show ends with a male narrating voice and a picture of a man holding a sign.

There is another fact of interest. Two men seen in this show are single. Since neither has a wife to do household chores for him, each must do his own household chores. Yet, neither is shown in his home. Why not? And why are there no single women on the show? If there were, would they be shown in the kitchen preparing food or cleaning? We do not know, for it seems that on Sesame Street only the men can be single, and not the women.

It is not the quality of the activity that is of prime importance. What is important is that women on Sesame Street, when they are represented, are continually represented in the same kind of activities--simply on the basis of their sex. What they are like as individuals is completely negated by their sex. Because they are seen as a class of people, rather than individuals, they are represented as being homogenious. Their activities or roles are very stereotyped.

It would seem that Sesame Street has tried to achieve equality in the way that it presents black people and white people. But over half of all black people are women. While Sesame Street is portraying black males in a less stereotyped role, it continues to present black females in the traditional stereotyped female role. If we are to have equality among people, then it must be among all people--not just among the males.